Student-Led Conferences: Empowering Students through Self-Assessment and Reflection

By Maryann J. Dreas-Shaikha

The author is an American teacher with seven years of international English teaching experience in Pakistan and the Republic of Georgia. She currently serves as the Assistant Headmistress and the Head of English Language at Karachi Grammar School-Middle Section in Karachi, Pakistan.

Conference: Assessment and Evaluation in the Global South
The Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development

Presentation Date: November 9, 2018

Abstract:

There is a serious need to reconsider the adult-led, grade-centered parent teacher meetings which are standard school practice. Schools and students would benefit from elevating PTMs with student voice and formative assessment that celebrates students' efforts and motivates them to continue learning. Under a reinvented framework for meetings, educators can redefine achievement, moving away from explicit focus on grades and behavior, and towards the exciting process of learning.

This paper expounds the argument that students learn better when they are empowered with tools that assess both their learning and their attitudes towards learning; moreover, it champions student-led meetings as a sustainable replacement to parent-teacher meetings, by narrating the transformation of the meetings at a private English-medium middle school in Pakistan.

"Follow the child. They will show you what they need to do, what they need to develop in themselves, and what area they need to be challenged in."

—Maria Montessori

He sat across from us, a round-faced 11-year-old, eyes darting nervously back and forth between his mother and me, his English teacher, as we spoke to each other about his recent C grade. He simply was not writing thorough answers, I pointed out, as I explained the expectations of the class 7 syllabus.

Finally, he gave up. His eyes glazed, gaze deadened, and he stared off into nothingness. His mother and I had not noticed.

It was a parent-teacher meeting, and we were "parenting" and "teaching". We mothered and slathered him with our most sagacious advice to "read regularly" (he already was, I later learned) and to "analyze the text and questions more deeply" (he was trying his honest best).

Only when he stood up to leave did I see the wet corner of his eye in the afternoon sun. He did not look at me as I chirped "see you in class", trying to inject some respite into the air. Nor did he return my gaze or my greetings in the corridors for the rest of the year. ■

The purpose of this paper is to stop tiny tragedies like this parent-teacher meeting, and the doubtless many just like it, from continuing. There is a serious need to reconsider the adult-led, grade-centered meetings which are standard school practice; schools need to elevate them with formative assessment that celebrates the student's endeavor and motivates them to continue learning. Under a reinvented framework for meetings, educators can redefine success and achievement, moving away from narrow, explicit focus on grades and behavior, and towards the exciting process of learning.

This paper has two intentions: 1.) To expound the argument that students learn better when they are empowered with assessment for learning tools that measure both their learning *and* their attitudes towards learning; and 2.) to champion *student-led meetings* as a sustainable replacement to traditional parent-teacher meetings, by narrating the transformation of the meetings at one school—Karachi Grammar School, Middle Section. Thus, this paper will report on the writer's experience initiating and implementing student-led meetings from late 2015 to 2018. The three-year process has been inward-looking and organic, filled with reflection and analysis of students surveys. Though overall feedback from all stakeholders has been positive, surveys show students have vastly different experiences with and mixed feelings about student-led meetings. Rather than disappoint school leaders, this authentic critique by the most credible voices (students') should accelerate fresh investigation and improvement of the experience for students. Thus, the initiative is a critical work in progress.

There are several terms which warrant definitions:

Parent-teacher meeting (PTM): a meeting between the teacher and parent, which includes or excludes the student. Information about the student's school experience is transmitted from the teacher to the parent. In our students' words, "a PTM is when the teacher and parents converse and identify the mistakes, and the child might or might not be compatible with the solutions" (May 2018 survey).

Student-led meeting (SLM): According to our students, "An SLM allows the student to reflect on their progress in class...themselves instead of the teacher telling the parents. Hence, unlike in the PTM, it gives the student a known voice." "It is when the students understand and evaluate their own mistakes and come up with solutions to improve themselves".

Student-led conference (SLC): a conference run by the student for their parents. The teacher listens or moves around to different students' conferences.

An SLM is a middle ground between a traditional PTM and a full-fledged SLC. Yet both SLMs and SLCs give students the opportunity to share with their parents their progress, demonstrating a growing sense of accountability and independence. They normally use a portfolio containing evidence of learning (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2018).

"Your son carved his initials in his wooden classroom desk and argued that he was merely doing desktop publishing."

This cartoon is not so far-off from reality. Many PTMs focus superficially on behavior management and send home a message that learning is about listening in class. At times, the child may not even be present!

(Picture credit: Integrated Learning Strategies, www.ilslearningcorner.com)

Methodology

The action research article "Teacher perspectives on pupil voice" illustrates how a UK elementary school teacher, Alison Peacock, became the "intellectual champion" of an initiative to prioritize student voice on campus (Bragg, 2007). Similarly, I became the intellectual champion and catalyst for the SLM initiative in late 2015 at my school, where I had been teaching for three years.

What does an intellectual champion do? They become the poster child for the project. They justify its importance, provide rationale, conduct training, create resources, engage in discussion, and nominate individual teachers to demonstrate excellence to others (Bragg, 2007).

Alison Peacock's initiative was not "a minor change in pedagogical practice which might be easily absorbed", but a paradigm shift in teachers' roles and practice, which understandably triggered complex questions about teachers' identities and relationships with students (Bragg, 2007). Both the SLM project and Peacock's project have signaled a paradigm shift, though SLMs to date have followed a more gradual trajectory, patiently working from within the separate subject departments, which have autonomy to interpret the curriculum and assess learning differently. Karachi Grammar School, Middle Section caters to approximately 540 students, aged 11 to 14 years. The teaching staff comprises about 50 full-time teachers with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Middle Section teachers create internal examinations twice a year, but are influenced by the external Cambridge Assessment and International Education examination system. Parents and students have traditionally taken pride in securing high marks and are motivated by summative assessment. Teachers express a dual aim of raising student achievement and instilling in students a genuine appreciation for their subjects.

The SLM initiative at my school has risen organically from its existing context. Without compromising its core pursuit of academic excellence, it has capitalized on changing winds and championed a set of beliefs about teaching, learning, and assessment:

- that it is insufficient to transmit content to students and then test them on it; we must teach actionable, relevant skills which are derived from the content;
- that students can and should become more responsible for their own learning;
- that students must be made aware of these subject skills so they can feel informed about the course targets;
- that these subject skills must be phrased in student-friendly language and discussed with students early in the year;
- that soft skills and attitudes towards learning are as important as subject skills and content;
- that reflection and self-assessment are credible and valuable learning tools that are worth pursing in the classroom;

- that more focus on formative assessment is necessary;
- that marks and grades tell only a small part of a student's story;
- that learning is a journey and not a destination;
- and, that an empowered learner is an engaged, informed, and motivated one.

Before I introduced SLMs in late 2015, school leaders had already introduced teachers to the growth mindset theory—i.e., that intelligence is not fixed but can be taught (Dweck, 2006)—and general habits of mind students need to become lifelong learners (Guy Claxton, cited in Leading and Learning, 2008). I sought to build upon this energy.

Initially, teachers expressed amicable acquiescence to SLMs. They unanimously agreed students should be more responsible for their learning and that the all stakeholders should focus more on growth than grades. Some were more cautious, doubting students' ability or willingness to reflect and set goals for themselves. A few said Pakistani children would not be comfortable speaking honestly in the presence of adult authority. It would be an error to dismiss these teachers' concerns as conservative reluctance to relinquish adult power to children; rather, they raise valid questions about identity and purpose (Bragg, 2007). Our teachers are deeply engaged in students' progress and care about them as individuals. But indeed, the role of a teacher must change in an SLM or SLC from guardian and transmitter of information to facilitator and listener. The SLM initiative was asking teachers to exercise restraint while encouraging the student to do most of the thinking and speaking. To give teachers a voice in the decision to replace PTMs with SLMs, I elicited their suggestions and anticipations using the Compass Points thinking strategy (Project Zero, 2011).

Students can only lead a meeting if their teachers have helped them self-assess and reflect on their learning. Otherwise, they will have little to say—understandably so!

(Picture credit: Andertoons, www.andertoons.com)

The most important step in the SLM initiative has been enabling teachers to help students measure and reflect on their growth. It required academic subject heads to determine what exactly they are teaching *through* the content of their course, and what will count as growth.

Within a few months, departments produced or procured from the British National Curriculum-Key Stage 3 or Cambridge syllabuses a list of target skills, and discussed these skills with students, instructing them to write them in reflection pages which had been printed in each student's notebook copy. An example from English Literature is below:

	Please write this subject's target skills here:	I understand, and I can do it!	I partially understand, and I can somewhat do it.	I do not understand, I cannot do it.
1	Discover the joys of reading Literature.			
2	Showing awareness of themes, characters, settings and contexts			
3	Understand and comment on the author's Point of views.			
4	Support opinions with relevent evidence and strong logical thinking and reasoning.			
5	Demonstrate an understanding of moral and ethical issues, and develop an awareness of the world they live in.			
6	Appreciate and understand the different aspects of human nature, values and perspectives.			
7	Appreciate the significance/value of a literary work.			
8	Demonstrate understanding of the ways which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings.			
9	Make thoughtfull in-text and world connections/draw parellels.			
10	Engage in meaningful class discussions.			
11	Take meaningful and relevant notes.			
12	Express their understanding of the text in a clear, formal and detailed manner.			

A list of target skills empowers students by informing them what they will be learning and working towards. It lends direction and relevance to a course of study. Most importantly, it gives students tangible language they need to discuss their learning, and clear criteria to identify personal strengths and areas for improvement. However, the *way* teachers present target skills determines whether or not they will motivate students to own their learning; if the list is simply distributed in a handout, looked at once or twice, and tucked away until the SLM, students will not be able to consolidate their class time or connect their coursework to a bigger picture. Their

self-assessment will be reduced to mere speculation—uninformed and unreflective. Yet if teachers *engage* students in ongoing discussion about whole-class and individual targets and show how to supplement self-assessment with evidence of coursework, they can demonstrate to students what the process of growth looks like.

Several times during the year at the Middle Section, students assess their progress towards these target skills. This self-reflection becomes the basis for the SLM and students begin by discussing an accomplishment or assignment they feel proud of, and then an area they feel less confident about, or coursework which reflects their struggle. At PTMs in the past, teachers and parents would advise and lecture students, whereas at SLMs, students propose and discuss solutions to their own shortcomings, with the guidance of teachers and parents.

English Language Skills:	I understand, and I can do it!	I partially understand it, and I can somewhat do it.	I do not understand. I cannot do it.
Interpret questions accurately and answer them fully		✓ (2nd Term)	✓ (1st Term)
Write in a focused, organised, and clear way			
Write creatively			
Write formally			
Use a variety of sentence structures			
Confidently read texts from different genres			
Read critically and make inferences			
Analyse a writer's purpose and message			
Understand how a writer uses language and style			
Use vocabulary thoughtfully			
Use punctuation and grammar carefully			
Logically discuss different sides of an argument			
Develop a point and justify it			
Speak clearly and effectively in front of others			
Participate in class and take good notes			

While training teachers and students for SLMs, I aimed for an "invitational rather than a directive, managerial model, offering scaffolded examples and attending carefully to the personal dimension" (Bragg, 2007, p.516). It was necessary to trust teachers to make their own changes

relevant to their practice and to allow them adopt the initiative at their own pace, as the meetings would greatly reflect their personal teaching style and relationship with students. Role plays between teachers and students prepared them for SLM conversations and showed them how to respond sensitively to potentially difficult interactions and scenarios. Scripted role plays also became exemplars by demonstrating the level of reporting, evidencing, and reflection expected during an SLM. I also provided videos and articles on schools which had transformed their PTMs into SLCs (Martinez and McGrath, 2014), as well as open-ended questions teachers could use to help students find their voice and deepen their points:

What to say to students:	**What to say to parents if they ask you questions the student can answer:**
What do you mean by that? Would you like to explain? Can you provide an example from your coursework? Why might that have happened? Can you think of a strategy to address that? What do you need? What might be interesting? What might be challenging? What will help?	That's an interesting question. Zara (student), what are your thoughts on that? I believe Zara can answer that. Zara, what do YOU think? Mr. and Mrs. Khan, do you have any questions for Zara?

In presentations to students, teachers, and parents, school leaders and I have redefined learning success as the effort, qualities, and attitudes students display on their individual journey towards discovery and enrichment. As a school affiliated with Cambridge Assessment and International Education, we took inspiration from the institution's habits of mind (Developing the Cambridge learner attributes, 2018) to paint a picture of a powerful learner: one who is curious, confident, innovative, engaged, reflective, and responsible. I wrote the rubric below for students to self-assess their own habits of mind, and to see and hear what high levels of curiosity, etc. look and sound like, and moreover, how they support learning. With descriptors at each level, students and teachers can better envision and measure soft skills which may otherwise be deemed too intangible and abstract to assess.

How curious are you? How reflective, innovative, engaged, confident, and responsible? Put a tick (✓) in the column which describes your attitude in each of the six traits. Follow your heart, not your marks.				
Curious	The world is awesome and mysterious. I have so much to learn! I enjoy exploring new information and I always have questions about it. When I don't know something, I really want to find out.	I try to challenge myself to be open to learning. I usually enjoy exploring new information and I often have lots of questions about it. Learning can be fun.	I learn when I have to. I don't mind exploring new information, but I wouldn't say that I really enjoy doing it. I have some questions about it, but not a lot. Learning is sometimes fun.	I would prefer to just have an answer than explore new information. I don't think I'm very inquisitive or open-minded. Learning is a lot of work.
Reflective	I often think about what I've learned. I can easily change my mind when I get new information. I can take what I've learned and apply it to new situations. I use what I learn!	I frequently think about what I've learned. I change my mind when I get new information. I'm often able to apply what I've learned to new situations.	I seldom find myself thinking about what I've learned. I'm settled in my ideas and sometimes find it hard to change my mind. It's sometimes hard for me to apply what I've learned to new situations.	I don't think much about what I've learned. I sometimes forget how I solved previous problems. I need some help learning more effectively.
Innovative	I challenge myself to think originally. I enjoy coming up with more than one solution to the same problem and I like seeing things from different perspectives. I love creating new things!	I try to think originally and creatively. I can usually think of more than one solution to the same problem and I'm able to see things from different perspectives. I'm able to create new things.	I can sometimes come up with my own ideas. I am sometimes creative. It's a little hard for me to think of multiple solutions to the same problem, or to see things from another perspective.	I think creative people are just born that way. I have difficulty seeing more than one solution to a problem. I see things through my own perspective.
Engaged	I pay attention to the world around me using all of my senses. I enjoy interacting with and learning from different people. I love participating and I get absorbed in what I'm doing.	I usually pay attention to the world around me using many of my senses. I can interact with and learn from different people. I often participate and get absorbed in what I'm doing.	I sometimes pay attention to my environment. If certain people are present, I interact with them and learn from them. I frequently participate in class, but I sometimes feel distracted.	It's hard to pay attention all the time. I prefer to interact with and learn from people I already know. I participate in class when I have to.

Confident	Setbacks are actually opportunities to grow in disguise. I feel good about my learning! I can confidently defend an idea or opinion. I know how to value and respect others' ideas without simply agreeing with them.	I try to look at setbacks as opportunities to grow. I feel pretty good about my learning. I can usually defend an idea or an opinion confidently. I am usually able to value and respect others' ideas instead of simply agreeing with them.	I feel OK about my learning, but it's hard for me to recover from setbacks. I am able to defend some of my ideas and opinions, but I would like to feel more confident in doing so. Others' ideas sometimes seem more valuable than mine.	I fear failure. I hold back and miss opportunities. Sometimes, I don't feel very good about my learning. I do not always think my ideas and opinions are as valuable as others'.
Responsible	I always try my best. I can set a goal and focus on accomplishing it. I think before I act, considering the situation, consequences and alternatives. I am aware of the impact of my words and actions.	I try my best. I can set a goal and can usually focus my attention on accomplishing it. I try to consider the situation, consequences and alternatives before I act. I am becoming more aware of the impact of my words and actions.	I try, but I don't always try my best. Sometimes, I just want to get it over with. I am learning that my words and actions give a certain impression of me, and that they can affect situations positively or negatively.	I don't put forth much effort. I just try to get by, and I feel anxious to get over with the work. I not sure whether my words and actions have much power over anything.

Learning Traits Rubric *Resource: M. Dreas-Shaikha*

Findings

The SLM initiative began as a mere floor plan to change the seating arrangement so students could face their parents and teachers, with the expectation that they would speak to them. The reality, though, of implementing a unified reporting method that relies so heavily on teachers' individual approaches towards teaching and assessment, and that aims to accommodate the diverse perspectives of parents, students, and teachers while giving students the microphone, has been a complex process with interesting results.

I have recently changed the way I champion SLMs by emphasizing less on the "preparation for performance" aspect of the actual meeting, and focusing more on building a culture of thinking full of formative assessment, specific feedback, and student voice—three factors that must inform and develop pedagogical practice regardless of the type of reporting method used during three-way meetings. Only from this ground can any type of SLM arise. Students will only feel empowered to speak when their teachers have empowered them to do so: when they have conditioned them to reflect honestly and assess their growth against clear criteria on a regular basis, not just for the purpose of the SLM. According to Professor Dylan Wiliam (2011), teachers' feedback and grades are useless at raising achievement unless they devote class time for reflection and improvement. Metacognitive analysis is heavy lifting work for the brain. Teachers simply cannot instruct students to reflect; they must model the process and teach them the purpose and benefits of thinking hard about their learning (Developing the Cambridge learner

attributes, 2018). In a May survey on the 2017-2018 school year, one student implored, “End the SLMs and resume the PTMs as teachers know more about the students’ academics than the student.” Another commented, “I felt that it was hard to talk about my mistakes while I was unaware of most of them.” This is exactly the problem and the point; students cannot take ownership unless schools trust them and take the time to enable them. A change of mindset is required.

Interestingly, at the Middle Section, we placed the cart before the horse by initiating SLMs before we had the tools or mindset to support them. The New Zealand Ministry of Education, which promotes SLCs in schools on the island, rightly recommends introducing them slowly, as they require modifications to pedagogical practice and even curriculum.

The SLM initiative cannot take credit for but has supported a growing culture of formative assessment and reflection at the school. School leaders regularly model reflective practice for staff using the strategy “what went well and even better if”, or “www.ebi”, to evaluate school initiatives. Teachers’ assessment literacy has been enhanced, and they now readily distinguish between formative and summative assessment and plan for assessment for learning. Student self-assessment and peer-assessment have replaced some teacher assessment, and descriptive rubrics have made teachers’ marking decisions less secretive and subjective, and more transparent for students. Professor John Hattie’s research (2017) reveals that self-reported grades are the second highest influence on student achievement, meaning students can predict their progress and grades with remarkable accuracy, based on teachers’ feedback. However, vague feedback hinders their ability to self-report: In the 2017-2018 survey, a student spoke for many: “Knowing that I have to (quoting a teacher) ‘work harder’ and I have the ‘potential to work harder’ but being unaware where to improve” made them feel “frustrated”. Specific praise and feedback shows learners what to do to succeed (Dweck, 2006 and Wiliam, 2011).

Another interesting result of the SLM initiative has been the question of whether teachers should inform parents of students’ misbehavior during an SLM, particularly when the student does not mention their own behavior. In a paradigm shift away from teacher management of learning, some teachers tend to express uncertainty about how to balance their concerns over students’ misbehavior with their desire to motivate them. What classifies as uncooperative behavior and whose responsibility it is to amend it can be a controversial question for teachers who are reexamining their roles, practice, and subject. One way to address misbehavior sensitively is to prompt the student to link their own behavior to academic targets and habits of mind. Questions like--

1. What do you think it means to be an engaged and responsible learner?
2. Tell us about a recent time when your behavior in class enabled you to learn deeply, complete your work on time, or work constructively with your peers.
3. How might your current behavior be affecting your learning? The learning of your peers?

--prompt students to reflect on their behavior. They convey a message that the teacher is more interested in developing their learning than in dealing with their behavior.

At the same time, schools should treat behavior, like grades, as only the surface layer of the deeper structures and pedagogical practices. It is more enriching to understand and teach the process of learning than to medicate the symptoms of lack of learning later.

Finally, the SLM initiative is undergoing its own self-assessment and reflection. I have conducted and analyzed two recent surveys of 273 students of classes 7-9 at the Middle Section, and their responses indicate they are interested in pursuing SLMs and have sincere suggestions for its improvement. The major theme from the responses is that *students appreciate being heard and thrive off the support of their teachers and parents*:

- "I wanted my mother to know that I am a good student."
- "I was confident because I knew the teacher was helping me and I was not hiding anything."
- "I was embarrassed to have to present my class work directly to my parent, even though it was mostly positive, because I was unsure about how they would react…However, I did appreciate that I could explain my work from my perspective as I feel that I understand it better than anyone else and so I could clear up any misunderstanding and was motivated to move forward."

Interestingly, the surveys show noticeable improvement in students' attitudes towards SLMs from the 2017-2018 academic year to 2018-2019.

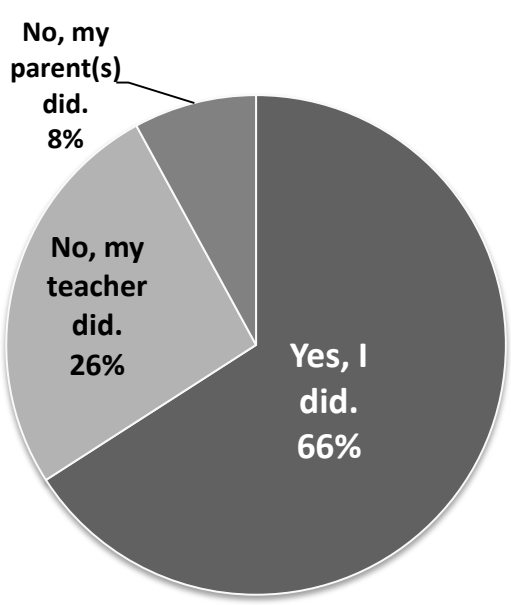
In 2017-2018 only 61 percent of students used evidence and self-assessment and reflection tools during the meeting. One student complained that rubrics make the meeting "too mechanical". Only 34 percent felt SLMs were better than PTMs, more (38 percent) preferred the old-fashioned model, and nearly as many were undecided between the two. These results demanded analysis and improvement.

Their qualitative responses suggested that students and teachers were treating the SLM like a PTM, adhering to the old model of teacher as keeper and transmitter of information about the student. Several students felt apathetic about their experience "Because it felt as if I was being lectured instead of giving my views and opinions on the topic", "because it was mostly just like a parent teacher meeting", and because "I felt as if the teacher's concerns were being voiced and emphasized…and my concerns were not the main focus." Apathy, for these students, and for the round-faced 11-year-old boy in the introduction to this paper, was a coping response to a situation that made them feel helpless. As psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers say, people cannot focus on abstract higher goals like education when they feel unsafe and vulnerable (Study.com. 2018).

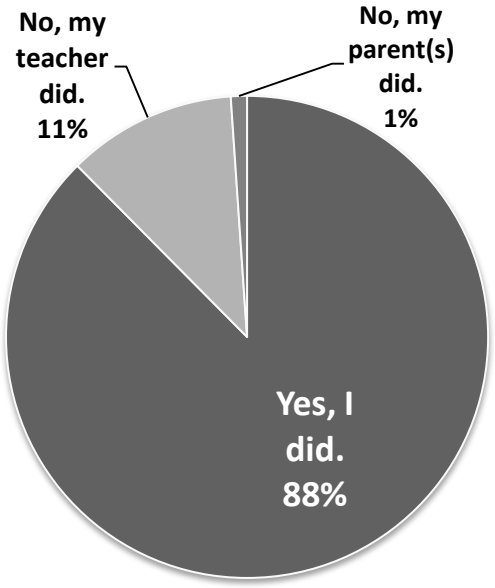
After providing students and teachers with more rationale and training, and after holding another school-wide SLM, student attitudes improved. The number of students who used their learning tools during the meetings rose from 61 to 90 percent. Moreover, 64 percent now felt that SLMs were better than PTMs, up from 34 percent.

Most importantly, student agency increased. In 2017-2018, only 49 percent of students felt comfortable speaking without their teacher's assistance, but that number jumped to 61 percent the next year. More students, 88 percent, came up with their own solutions to challenges, up from 66 percent the previous year.

Did you come up with any solutions or ideas during your SLM?

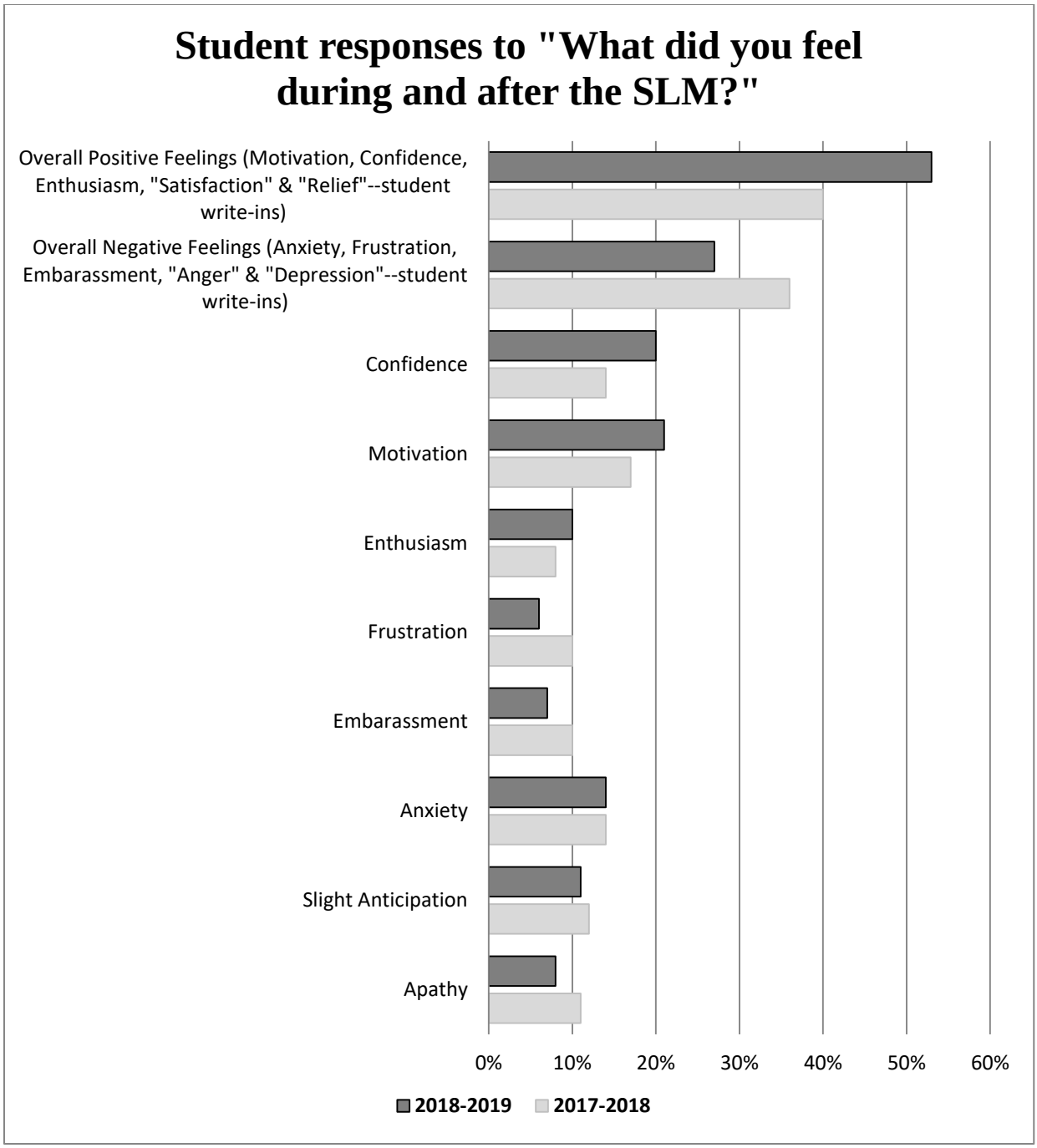


2017-2018



2018-2019

Moreover, comparison of the surveys shows that students experienced more positive feelings as time passed and the project improved. Motivation, enthusiasm, and confidence rose from 40 to 53 percent, and negative feelings (anxiety, frustration, embarrassment, etc.) decreased from 36 to 27 percent.



Students reported more positively when they focused on their individual growth: “I was learning things about myself which was interesting and the good things got me motivated,” and “I felt motivated because I knew that whatever I would take home from this SLM would help me in any future assignments or in class work.”

Discussion and Conclusion

The SLM initiative at the Middle Section is a work in progress that has been punctuated with successes and areas for improvement. Through patient modification of pedagogy to include more formative assessment, reflection, and student voice, SLMs have become an integral part of a gradual paradigm shift.

The roots of student-led conferences draw water from the humanism theory of education, with its regard for the learner's experiences and psychological needs. Psychologists Maslow and Rogers (Study.com, 2018) and Professors Claxton (2008) and Dweck (2006) assert that the goal of education is to create students *who want to learn and know how to learn.* Developing "the capacity to learn" (Claxton, 2008) through SLCs can enable students to continue learning after school. Economists predict that by the year 2022, employees will need 101 days of training and up-skilling to remain relevant in the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Wood, 2018). How are schools adapting to an unpredictable workforce? Prioritizing skill-based learning, enabling students to make learning decisions, and developing habits of mind and the capacity to learn are the way forward.

To conclude, I focus on student-led conferences as an entry point into transforming a school into a culture of thinking, not because SLCs are a "fix-all" or "one-stop" solution, and not even because they are necessarily the best way to empower students. I focus on SLCs because:

- SLCs can give students more voice, responsibility, and autonomy in their learning;
- They stimulate formative assessment, reflection, and positive attitudes toward learning;
- They can strengthen relationships between students, teachers, and parents;
- They can encourage stakeholders to adopt a "growth" rather than a "fixed" mindset towards intelligence and ability (Dweck, 2006);
- They can shift attitudes away from grades and products, and towards effort, classwork, and the process of learning;
- They literally and figuratively turn the tables on traditional PTMs, symbolizing different roles for the child and the adults through a different setting arrangement;
- They are a revealing snapshot of the larger picture of a teacher's approach and regular practices and a student's actual learning;
- They are a sustainable practice;
- They do not require an excessive amount of resources, training, funding, or technology;
- They are relatively simple to implement in existing school systems;
- There is no correct way to implement SLCs, and administrators can modify the basic model to suit their school's readiness level and unique needs;
- Research shows that all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, and administration) prefer SLCs over traditional PTMs;
- **And, most importantly, SLCs begin a larger discussion about the purpose of education, a school's teaching and assessment culture, and the lessons and messages it is sending its students, both directly and indirectly.**

What SLCs are not and should not be:

- A scripted performance in which the student and teacher put on masks and act differently than they do in class;
- A hastily adopted method which puts administrative pressure on students and teachers;
- A fleeting trend, superficially adopted without the required scaffolding and rationale required to make SLCs truly student-led and sustainable.

References:

Assessment Reform Group (2002). *Testing, Motivation and Learning*. Cambridge: The Nuffield Foundation. Available at: https://www.aaia.org.uk/content/uploads/2010/06/Testing-Motivation-and-Learning.pdf

Bragg, S. (2007) *'But I listen to children anyway!'—teacher perspectives on pupil voice*, Educational Action Research, 15:4, 505-518, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09650790701663973

Developing the Cambridge learner attributes. (2018). [PDF] Cambridge Assessment and International Education. Available at: https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/417069-developing-the-cambridge-learner-attributes-.pdf

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Ballantine Books, pp. 173-212.

Hattie, J. (2017). *Hattie effect size list - 256 Influences Related To Achievement*. [online] Visible Learning. Available at: https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/ [Accessed 13 Oct. 2018].

Leading and Learning. (2008). *Guy Claxton's Magnificent Eight*. [online] Available at: https://leading-learning.blogspot.com/2008/11/guy-claxtons-magnificent-eight.html.

Martinez, M. and McGrath, D. (2014). *Why Students Should Take the Lead in Parent-Teacher Conferences: Deeper Learning How Eight Innovative Public Schools Are Transforming Education in the Twenty-First Century*. [online] KQED: Mind Shift. Available at: https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/37500/why-students-should-take-the-lead-in-parent-teacher-conferences.

New Zealand Ministry of Education (2018). *Student-led conferences and three-way conferences / Student self assessment and reflection / Examples and templates / Reporting to parents & whānau / Home - Assessment*. [online] Assessment Online. Available at: http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Reporting-to-parents-whanau/Examples-and-templates/Student-self-assessment-and-reflection/Student-led-conferences-and-three-way-conferences.

Project Zero (2011). Compass Points: A routine for examining propositions. [online] Visible Thinking. Harvard Graduate School of Education. Available at: http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03c_Core_routines/CompassPoints/CompassPoints_Routine.html

Study.com. (2018). Humanism: Overview & Practical Teaching Examples - Video & Lesson Transcript | Study.com. [online] Available at: https://study.com/academy/lesson/humanism-overview-practical-teaching-examples.html [Accessed 28 Aug. 2018].

Wiliam, D. (2011). *Embedded Formative Assessment*. Bloomington: Solution Tree Press, pp.107-132.

Wood, J. (2018). *Children in Singapore will no longer be ranked by exam results. Here's why*. [online] World Economic Forum. Available at: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/10/singapore-has-abolished-school-exam-rankings-here-s-why/.